

Briefing for the Citizen Participation and Public Petitions Committee on petition [PE2033](#): 'Introduce a full ban on disposable vapes', lodged by Jordon Anderson

Brief overview of issues raised by the petition

[PE2033](#) calls on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to legislate for a full or partial ban on disposable vapes in Scotland, and recognise the dangers that these devices pose to both the environment and the health of young people.

Prevalence of disposable vapes in Scotland

Zero Waste Scotland was commissioned by the Scottish Government in early 2023 to conduct a review of the environmental impact of single-use e-cigarettes (also known as disposable vapes), and potential policy options for improving management of the devices. The [report, published in June 2023](#), found that an estimated 10.8% of Scotland's adult population were regular users of e-cigarettes in 2022, twenty-seven percent of whom were users of single-use e-cigarettes, as opposed to their refillable or rechargeable equivalents. Twenty-two percent of under-18s were estimated to be users of e-cigarettes, with fifty-nine percent of those primarily using single-use e-cigarettes. Between April 2022 and April 2023 the estimated number of single-use e-cigarettes consumed in Scotland was between 21 million and 26 million units. The report further noted that the popularity of single-use e-cigarettes has increased rapidly in recent years, with sales almost doubling between October 2022 and March 2023.

Environmental impact of disposable vapes

Single-use e-cigarettes are associated with a range of environmental issues, from their manufacture to disposal. [An estimated 4,292 tonnes](#) of carbon dioxide equivalent (CO₂e) were created during the manufacture of the single-use e-cigarettes consumed in Scotland in 2022. These emissions are equivalent to [2,100 cars on Scotland's roads](#).

In the absence of available data on the number of single-use e-cigarette units littered, the Zero Waste Scotland report offered an estimate informed by the findings of a survey conducted in June 2022, which explored the discarding habits of single-use e-cigarette users. Using the survey data, the research team calculated low and high estimates of littered single-use e-cigarettes as a percentage of Scotland's total sales. Through these calculations, Zero Waste Scotland estimated that [between 721,000 and 2,787,800 e-cigarette units](#) were littered in Scotland in 2022.

Single-use e-cigarettes are often made of plastic, which could potentially be recycled if properly discarded. The devices contain lithium batteries, which [could be recharged up to 500 times](#) if the product design allowed. However, in practice, the design of single-use e-cigarettes does not facilitate easy recycling of the battery and other components. Zero Waste Scotland's [list of suggested policy options](#) includes setting design criteria for single use e-cigarettes, to ensure that batteries can be removed and the devices can be recycled.

Health implications of vaping

E-cigarettes offer a less harmful alternative to smoking tobacco, and can be a useful tool in smoking cessation. However, e-cigarettes are increasingly [marketed towards children and non-smokers](#), and may create a new route into tobacco smoking. Younger people who experiment with e-cigarettes are [three times more likely](#) to start smoking cigarettes. In June 2023, ASH Scotland [called on the Scottish Government](#) to consider [following Australia's policy](#) of making e-cigarettes available only on prescription, for people who wish to use them as a smoking cessation aid.

The long-term health impacts of vaping are not yet clear. There is [currently no robust evidence](#) to suggest that vaping causes cancer. However, e-cigarettes carry some health risks, including mouth and throat irritation, nausea, and [chronic coughing](#). E-cigarettes contain nicotine, an addictive substance that can [inhibit brain development](#) in young people. Children and young people are more susceptible to nicotine addiction than adults.

The [World Health Organisation cautioned](#) that the aerosols generated by e-cigarettes raise the concentration of particulate matter in indoor environments, and may therefore pose potential risks to those in the vicinity of a person using an e-cigarette.

[Positive portrayals of vaping](#) on social media platforms such as TikTok have contributed to the popularity of e-cigarettes among young people. The UK Advertising Standards Authority has made a series of recent rulings prohibiting the promotion of e-cigarettes on TikTok, including the [promotion of Elf Bars](#) and [unlicensed vaping products](#).

Scottish Government actions

The Scottish Government is considering the [nine shortlisted policy options](#) recommended by the Zero Waste Scotland report. Among the options suggested in the report were a ban on the sale of single-use e-cigarettes, tightening existing laws to restrict sales of e-cigarettes to under-18s, and requiring that batteries can be removed and replaced to enable devices to be re-used.

In early 2022, the Scottish Government [held a public consultation on vaping products](#). The findings of the consultation will inform the Scottish Government's refreshed [Tobacco Action Plan](#), which is due to be published later in 2023.

Scottish Parliament actions

In response to [written question S6W-14530](#) on 9 February 2023, the Minister for Minister for Green Skills, Circular Economy and Biodiversity, Lorna Slater MSP confirmed that she had commissioned an urgent review of the environmental impacts and management of single-use e-cigarettes. The outcome of this review was the Zero Waste Scotland report referenced throughout this briefing.

The [Circular Economy \(Scotland\) Bill](#) was introduced in the Scottish Parliament on 13 June 2023, and the [Net Zero, Energy and Transport Committee](#) will begin its scrutiny of the Bill following summer recess. Though the Bill does not explicitly reference single-use e-cigarettes, it proposes giving powers to Scottish Ministers to make regulations “requiring suppliers of single-use items to charge a minimum amount for such items, with the policy aim of reducing the consumption of such items, and therefore reducing the environmental harm caused.” The [policy memorandum](#) notes that “A regulation-making power allows other single-use items likely to have a harmful impact upon the environment, for which there may not yet be a sufficient evidence base, to be addressed in the future”.

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20 July 2023

The purpose of this briefing is to provide a brief overview of issues raised by the petition. SPICe research specialists are not able to discuss the content of petition briefings with petitioners or other members of the public. However, if you have any comments on any petition briefing you can email us at spice@parliament.scot

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